

**Proof 32**

June 5 — July 4  
2026

Dion Smith-Dokkie  
Long Xi Vlessing  
Parumveer Walia  
Tommy Keith  
Zaynab Ghaïs-Mortada



**G44**

Centre for  
Contemporary  
Photography

“A place my place interchangeable dispensable who needs  
Places who my place if I leave it no one  
Will conquer it place not to be occupied why then  
Go full of must a place and an exit  
Allotted to no one place nameless corner  
In the eye the place of wakefulness nothing and here  
But room armchair bed wall door and the handle  
The handle going street meadow wood blade of grass even clay

Is Am - Beg for time

Is Am - Beg to be

Is Am - Beg for I

Dancing on the needle-point of breath

On the point

Balance

And then

Leap

In”

This is a poem by Swiss poet Franz Wurm about losing the ability to take relationships for granted. Instead, intimacy is only found through an act of daring. My interpretation is that his displacement from Czechoslovakia led him to that other-place of multi-lingualism, the wordless nowhere that is at the same time *full* of the earth's intensity of nameless not knowing.

This poem and I have felt the parade, a round now, moving, moving still, living in grief. The orbit afforded by an infinite leash. Farewell city, friends, Jos, Paul. Hello raving life.

Photographs can speak two, three languages at once. They get busy in the larval time of in-between suspicion, that shadow area not covered by any single tongue. So no tongue? Or a continuity of real seconds working lightly, living everything?

This poem and Long Xi's ritual devotion have seen grief as a constellation. *Half of love is still* Love's fragile, funny portraits of family and strangers come from a personal diary made in the wake of their Yeye's passing. They announce ecstasy in the face of overwhelm, "outside is where we are, outside."

This poem and Zaynab's manuports carry the mnemonic agony of matter out of place. The Rectoversos' proximity is provenance that cuts across public and private in a manner attentive to the growing murmur of the archive. *Za'out*, *To my dearest* and *How do you hold a tree?* are projects of density—invasions and occupations of southern Lebanon and their current repercussions.<sup>1</sup> They are love letters in which affection's echo bounces. The opposite of prophecy is praise. To praise is to acknowledge what something is without covering it up. The objects do not cover so much as insist on proceeding in an ethic of non-intrusion. Time does not pass, it endures.

This poem and Dion's abstract counter-mappings of water both hear the vertigo of deformation felt when caught between competing visions. Canada's *modus operandi* of destructive resource extraction leaves those who commune with life with the realization that most of what should be said cannot be addressed in terms of coherence. Trance-elation from the otolith reverse engineers the unsteady (the other form of integrity) to speak to terraforming's impact on a family's procession with the land. The concluding point of these collages is not a final point, but where something begins to unfurl.

This poem and Tommy's picture box conversation starter hear the 'sea-change' of repetition where water meets trees, where what is momentary merges with what is almost all there is. Years of circumambulating Sunnyside teaches us that we are a we when we are nature together, not just pointing towards it. Insisting on this beautiful movement together is key to growing a place.

This poem and Parumveer's queer docu-fiction taste the weight of the warp and the weft left at odds. Contradiction is no shortcoming, however. Love's becoming force is seen here in its ability to intensify the knots between public and private. This care web is met with state violence. Paradoxes live at the animal edge of established systems and tool resistance to scopical control. Looking is never simple. *Sirens* speculates on socio-political episodes where even tenderness is disengagement from normative power's coercion.

Among these five problem spaces where more than a single language is present, all that appears identical comes close to being withdrawn. Yet the wider these unfixed bodies scatter the greater their ability to link up with the rest. Dot by dot, now there is something held in common. Tension. A bed is not a bed. A stone is not a stone. A lake is not a lake. Instead, the character swings open. Adjusting my throat to this collapse leaves me feeling as if I have nothing to say. But what is a new present tense? Immense silent self deeply involuted with self pushing and pulling. So quiet this intimacy, this belonging. It feels like epiphany, this everyday command: observe the changes in the land and the interconnectedness of beings because the stories we learn here are lessons needed to survive.

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<sup>1</sup> Many of the photographs in this project were taken in Zaynab's maternal village of Chihine, from which their families have been displaced since November 2023 as the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) still bombard Southern Lebanon. The village has been completely flattened as of December 2024.

**Benjamin de Boer** is spending summer travelling the Avalon Peninsula to build the East Coast Trail. You can read his writing in *The Capilano Review*, *Brossura*, *The iJournal* and *Reading Night:002*.

**Dion Smith-Dokkie** currently lives and works in the Peace Region of northwest Alberta/Treaty 8. He holds an MFA in Visual Arts from UBC, a BFA in Painting and Drawing from Concordia and BA from UVIC. Dion has shown at places like PLATFORM, the Polygon, The Bows, Gallery Gachet, SUM, the Art Gallery of Grande Prairie, the Belkin, Wil Aballe and Ceremonial/Art. His work oscillates around intermedia image practice, post-representational cartography, translation and morphology as a practice of escapist, sentimental formalism. He is a member of West Moberly First Nations.

**Long Xi Vlessing** is a Vancouver-born artist working across photography and film. His evolving practice centres diaristic photography in exploring intimacy and the lived-in body, the shared humanity of strangers and quotidian scenes as sites of personal and collective transformation. His work often emerges from his intrigue, curiosity and restlessness regarding the social contours underlying everyday life. This reflects in his circadian practice, playing with the photographic medium through a mix of digital, medium-format and phone cameras in the tradition of documentary.

**Tommy Keith** is a photographer based in Toronto, Ontario. He makes photographs of people and places close to where he lives, and his projects often involve returning to the same areas over extended periods of time. Tommy's work has been featured in numerous publications including *The New York Times*, *Fisheye Magazine* and *Vogue Italia*, among others. His self-published book *Don't Forget to Wave* received an Honourable Mention for The Burtynsky Grant and was a Lucie Photo Book Prize finalist. He holds an MFA in photography from Columbia College Chicago.

Based in Tiohtiá:ke/Montréal, **Zaynab Ghāis-Mortada** is a self-taught artist who works primarily with photographic objects. Her artistic work has been featured in publications across North America and Europe, and has been presented in solo and group exhibitions across Québec. Zaynab holds a BA in Philosophy from McGill University and has led research on gendered Islamophobia and epistemic violence in Québec.

**Parumveer Walia** is a lens-based artist working in photography and film. His practice extends image-making into video, installation and object-based forms, drawing on expanded media and queer aesthetics. Through archival research, Walia situates historical episodes within his lived experiences to construct hybrid narratives that remain deliberately unstable. Walia holds a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art + Design and was a finalist for the Philip B. Lind Prize. Upcoming projects include NOCTURNE, Halifax (October, 2026) and a public art commission with the City of Vancouver (June, 2026). His next publication, *Shadow Fields*, is currently underway.

**Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography** is an artist-run centre committed to supporting diverse approaches to photographic and image-based practices through exhibitions, education programs and facilitating artistic production. Gallery 44 provides space and context for meaningful dialogue between artists and publics. Together, we offer an entry point to explore the artistic, cultural, historic, social and political implications of the image in our ever-expanding visual world.

#### Cover image

Long Xi Vlessing, *Blue Mother*, from the series *Half of Love is Still Love*, 2025

#### Poster images (clockwise)

Zaynab Ghāis-Mortada, زنوط / knucklebones (a game of five stones, to play with friends), from the series زنوط, or the art of throwing stones, river stones on inkjet print, 2018

Dion Smith-Dokkie, *Current and correspondent* (detail), watercolour, holographic, glass beads, handmade aluminum frame, 2024, image courtesy of The Polygon Gallery and Akeem Nermo

Parumveer Walia, *Field Notes*, archival inkjet in aluminum frame, 2026

Tommy Keith, *Smile*, from the series *By the Lake*, 2025

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